United Nations A/HRC/39/NGO/18

General Assembly

Distr.: General
29 August 2018

English only

Human Rights Council
Thirty-ninth session
10-28 September 2018
Agenda item 3
Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development

Written statement* submitted by the Khiam Rehabilitation Center for Victims of Torture, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[16 August 2018]

* Issued as received, in the language(s) of submission only.

GE.18-14213(E)
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Mistreatment and lack of medical care in Bahraini prisons**

Mistreatment in prisons

In Bahrain, authorities are failing to meet the minimum standards for the treatment of prisoners, notably by using torture, harassment and retaliatory policies against political prisoners and placing them under extremely harsh detention conditions. Dry Dock Prison and Jau Central Prison, in particular, have been known for their use of coercive interrogations and serious human rights abuses. A number of former detainees have reported being subjected to physical assault, including electric shocks, suspension in painful positions, compulsory standing for prolonged periods, exposure to extreme low temperatures, sexual assault and abuse, and other forms of torture. That is, in addition to considerable restrictions from the authorities on their communications in violation of human rights standards and the Nelson Mandela Rules. This has led many prominent Bahraini activists, including Nabeel Rajab, to call on the Government to abide by international human rights standards.

Lack of adequate medical care

Denial of medical care is another serious issue in Bahraini prisons, where convicted prisoners who wish to receive treatment at private health centers – often at their own expense – are not able to do so. Despite efforts made by the prison administration to release prisoners whose life in prison poses a threat to their lives, this possibility is only granted in a very limited number of cases of insurmountable diseases.

One example is that of Hassan Mushaima, aged 70, who - at the time of writing this report- is in urgent need of treatment. Suffering from several chronic diseases which he had previously undergone several operations for, the prison administration is still preventing him from having access to medical care and medication. While he has called on competent authorities and the prison administration for his health status to be taken into account, no response was ever given to him from either of these parties. In addition to this, and along with his fellow imprisoned opposition leaders, he was also subjected to humiliating inspection of his personal items, some of which were arbitrarily confiscated.

Shortage of medical staff

Regarding in-prison medical care, and despite the high numbers of detainees, specifically in Jau central prison and Dry Dock prison, only one doctor is available for per facility. As a result of this shortage, relatives of detainees have often reported that doctors do not always perform medical examination but resort to less time-consuming options such as giving medication and painkillers. Furthers, doctor often delay the transfer of some detainees to hospitals and outpatient clinics, while other prisoners are prevented from being transferred as a direct consequence of the prison administration failing to ensure their right to undergo medical examination in the first place.

Recommendations

In light of all of the above, SALAM for Democracy and Human Rights recommends:

To the Bahraini authorities:

- to take quick and urgent steps in order to end the suffering of detainees,
- to allow all detainees to receive the necessary and appropriate medical treatment,
- to release all prisoners of conscience, especially those suffering from chronic diseases and persons with special needs,
- to stop targeting human rights activists, politicians and media who demand justice and respect of their rights,
- to release, redress and compensate them for the damage they suffered,
- to recognize them as national symbols who bear the love of the homeland and its interest in their heart.

**Salam For Democracy and Human Rights, NGO without consultative status, also shares the views expressed in this statement.